

Jefferson on Display: Attire, Etiquette, and the Art of Presentation. By G. S. Wilson. Jeffersonian America. (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2018. Pp. xviii, 287. \$29.50, ISBN 978-0-8139-4129-5.)

G. S. Wilson's fascinating *Jefferson on Display: Attire, Etiquette, and the Art of Presentation* is a close and detailed study of art and material culture that explores Thomas Jefferson's presentation of self. The book makes an important contribution to Jefferson scholarship as well as to the field of material culture studies. Through her analysis, Wilson provides a master class in how historians can use art and material culture alongside written primary sources to develop a compelling argument.

Jefferson on Display opens with a comment made by the British legation secretary Augustus John Foster, who in 1807 accused Thomas Jefferson of ““playing a game”” with his appearance—wearing “worn, mismatched clothing and yarn stockings, his slippers down at the heel”—for political reasons (p. 1). Wilson agrees with Foster that Jefferson's choices were deliberate, but she shows that they were more than a game of political popularity for Jefferson. Instead, they were a core part of his “struggle to determine the direction of the American republic” and later to solidify his own legacy as a leader in the establishment of the United States (p. 5). Wilson argues that throughout his life Jefferson “continued to shift between the guise he had created as the representative the people had elected . . . and the gentleman in the black suit” (p. 180).

Wilson's exploration of Jefferson's presentation of self is based primarily on portraits of Jefferson but also on busts, medals, and political cartoons. Through eight chronological chapters, the book tracks Jefferson from 1784, when he arrived in Paris for the first time, to his death at Monticello in 1826. One of the real strengths of this book is the close reading Wilson gives to works of art. Including historical contexts, providing information from artists and similar artworks, and casting her own careful eye over the portraits, Wilson explains the significance of the material culture depicted in them. In her discussion

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of a circa 1799 political cartoon, *The Providential Detection*, for example, Wilson argues that Jefferson's footwear in this depiction "definitely links with revolution and reform. . . . Jefferson wears ankle-high shoes or boots that are tied with strings rather than closed with the usual buckles" (p. 117). The shoes were one of many elements of the political cartoon that criticized Jefferson for being influenced by revolutionary ideas from Europe. The same style of shoes appeared much later, in the final portrait made of Jefferson, painted by Thomas Sully between 1821 and 1822, and Wilson writes that Jefferson may have worn them "in deference to old political connotations or simply for practicality and comfort" (p. 211). Given how carefully Jefferson had cultivated his public image over the decades, it is difficult to imagine that he did not intend to send a message with his choice of footwear.

Although Wilson's narrative is tightly focused on the art and material culture that shed light on Jefferson's presentation of self, the book includes enough of the historical political context that one need not be a Jefferson scholar to understand how and why Jefferson deployed different guises as part of his larger political agenda. *Jefferson on Display* is highly recommended not only for those interested in Jefferson but also for those intrigued by material culture and questions of human identity, "branding," and authenticity.

Rebecca K. Shrum

Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis